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## ASPECTS OF AUTUMN IN ROMAN POETRY

BY KEITH PRESTON

In their treatment of the seasons, as in most other respects, English poets have derived much from the Latins. The degree of advance or development varies with the different seasons. Without any very exhaustive examination of the evidence, I venture the opinion that in spring poetry classical canons have most largely prevailed, because, no doubt, the Roman poets treated this season with a high degree of sentiment, and realized to the full most of the inevitable thrills and associations. Then too such striking phenomena as the revival of life in growing things and the awakening of love are very little influenced by local climatic conditions. Summer, on the contrary, was, generally speaking, an uncongenial season to the Roman poets; the torrid summers of Italy made their impression on poetry, and the "glorious summer" of English literature is a distinct change from Roman references to the scorching dog days. A more delicate and interesting problem is presented by the autumn season. It seems to be the prevailing impression that externals, for the most part agreeable, entirely governed the handling of this season in the Roman poets, and that the seasonal melancholy which figures so largely in modern poetry is a comparatively recent innovation.<sup>1</sup> There is certainly much reason for this assumption, but a review of the evidence has convinced me that the modern idea was not altogether a "sudden leap" in evolution, but to some extent a development from plain suggestions in the Roman poets.<sup>2</sup> The present paper is designed to review in a cursory way the various aspects of autumn in the Roman poets. Though my title seems to limit the consideration to autumn, I shall include such references to winter as bear directly on important poetical associations. Autumn (*autumnus*), and winter (*hiems, bruma*) are not sharply distinguished

<sup>1</sup> See Gustave Lanson, *Lamartine: Méditations poétiques*, nouvelle édition (Paris, 1915), t. I, pp. 247-48.

<sup>2</sup> This problem may more safely be left to my English colleague, Professor Crane, in his forthcoming study of *Autumn In English Poetry*.

in the Roman poets; in fact, where late autumn (*autumnus paeceps*) is the season referred to, *autumnus* and *hiems* are used indiscriminately in the same passage.

The Italian autumn follows the harvest and brings in the vintage. Relief from scorching Sirius, tempered warmth, rest from toil, with rich rewards and rustic celebrations, mark the season for the farmer, and on all these things the Roman poets love to dwell. Their autumn landscapes show the orchards laden down with heavy fruit, and vines where the luscious, richly tinted grapes hang in full clusters. Presently the grapes are picked—a light, glad exertion—and juice from the trodden presses foams in the vats. A holiday, with rest for man and beast, follows the completion of the vintage. There are honors for Ceres and Bacchus. Food and wine, rude dances and ruder songs, with games and trials of skill, amuse the gathered countryside.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with these pictures the personifications of autumn are benignant or neutral. In the Palace of the Sun, ranged with the Days, the Months, the Year, the Ages, the Hours, and the other Seasons, “stood also Autumn, stained with the trampled grapes, and icy Winter, shaggy, with hoary locks.”<sup>2</sup> Another personification is suggested to Ovid by tempered warmth: “Next comes Autumn, no longer with the hot blood of youth, but mellow, mild, a happy blend of youth and age, with white hairs scattered over his temples. Then aged Winter comes, unkempt, with stumbling tread, robbed of his hair, or, what he has, quite white.”<sup>3</sup> In one beautiful and rather elaborate procession of the Seasons, Autumn strides side by side with Euhius (Bacchus).<sup>4</sup> Again, he “rears from the fields his head, comely with mellow fruit.”<sup>5</sup> The personification Plenty (*Copia*)

<sup>1</sup> See Vergil *Geor.* ii. 1-8. 516-31; Horace *Odes* iii. 18. 5-16; Ovid *Trist.* iii. 10 71-72; Lucretius i. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid *Met.* ii. 29-30:

Stabat et Autumnus, calcatis sordidus uvis:  
Et glacialis Hiems, canos hirsuta capillos.

<sup>3</sup> Ovid *Met.* xv. 209-13:

Excipit Autumnus, posito fervore iuventae  
Maturus, mitisque, inter iuvenemque senemque  
Temperie medius, sparsis per tempora canis.  
Inde senilis Hiems tremulo venit horrida passu,  
Aut spoliata suos, aut, quos habet, alba capillos.

<sup>4</sup> Lucr. v. 737-50.

<sup>5</sup> Horace *Epodes* ii. 17-18:

Vel, cum decorum mitibus pomis caput  
Autumnus agris extulit.

and especially the horn of plenty (*cornucopia*) have a special affinity for autumn.<sup>1</sup> Epithets are in keeping with the personifications. Some have to do with appearance. Autumn is beautiful or lovely (*formosus*),<sup>2</sup> parti-colored (*varius*),<sup>3</sup> stained (*sordidus*)<sup>4</sup> from the trodden grape. The productiveness of autumn is also recognized in epithet, as in wealthy (*dives*) autumn,<sup>5</sup> crop-bearing (*frugifer*),<sup>6</sup> fruit-bearing (*pomifer*),<sup>7</sup> winy (*mustulentus*).<sup>8</sup> The fact that autumn and the south wind (*Auster*) brought rain and a sickly season in the vicinity of Rome leads to the occasional use of such epithets as oppressive (*gravis*)<sup>9</sup> and pallid (*pallens*).<sup>10</sup>

The idyllic quality of autumn in Roman poetry is emphasized by poetic references to the so-called everlasting (*perpetuus*) autumn of the Phaeacians. Homer, describing the garden of Alcinous, says:

There tall trees grow and flourish, pears and pomegranates, apples with splendid fruitage, sweet figs and flowering olives; the fruit of these is never lost, it faileth not winter nor summer throughout the year, but ever and ever Zephyr blowing starts some to growth and ripens others. Pear after pear grows ripe, and apple upon apple, grape after grape, and fig on fig. There is a fruitful vineyard planted, of which one part, a warm spot on flat ground, is drying in the sun. Some grapes are being gathered, others they tread, while in the foreground these grapes are shedding the blossom and those just coloring.<sup>11</sup>

“Apples of Alcinous” became proverbial with the Roman poets,<sup>12</sup> and from the autumnal coloring of this favorite scene they referred to it as the everlasting autumn of the Phaeacians.<sup>13</sup> Partly, perhaps, through the medium of this passage there is much in common between autumn passages and descriptions of the Golden Age, the Happy

<sup>1</sup> See Ovid *Met.* ix. 88–92; Horace *Epistles* i. 12. 29; *Odes* i. 17. 14–16. For this commonplace in general see Otto, *Sprichwörter*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid *Ars am.* ii. 315 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Horace *Odes* ii. 5. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ovid *Met.* ii. 29; *Fasti* 4. 897.

<sup>5</sup> Seneca *Apocol.* 2. 1 Statius *Silv.* v. 1. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Avienus *Arat.* 1807.

<sup>7</sup> Horace *Odes* iv. 7. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Apuleius *Met.* ii. 116. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Horace *Sat.* ii. 6. 19; cf. Porphyrio on Horace *Epistles* i. 16. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Statius *Silv.* ii. 1. 217.

<sup>12</sup> See Otto, *op. cit.*, s.v. Alcinous.

<sup>11</sup> *Odyssey* vii. 114 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Juvenal v. 151.

Isles, etc., in Roman poetry. The Golden Age is by explicit statement everlasting spring (*ver aeternum*) according to Ovid,<sup>1</sup> and Vergil, in his eloquent description of Italy, exalts the same season.<sup>2</sup> But the same poet, after his fine lines on autumn, declares, "Such was the life that golden Saturn led on earth."<sup>3</sup> So also Horace, describing the Happy Isles, depicts the vine which ever flourishes unpruned, the never-failing olive, and the ripe fig decking its own proper tree,<sup>4</sup> while his lines on a late autumn festival to Faunus add a touch which seems distinctly reminiscent of the regular Golden Age descriptions, "The wolf roams among the fearless lambs."<sup>5</sup>

The ideal season as discussed above is, in a general way, early autumn and the height of the season (*autumnus novus, adultus*). With the decline of autumn (*autumnus vergens, paeceps*) and the advent of winter (*bruma*)<sup>6</sup> come various changes which the poets recognize in a descriptive, and to some extent a sentimental, way. Such are rapid alternations of temperature, mists, storms, frosts, the yellowing and falling of the leaves, the hibernation and migration of birds.<sup>7</sup> Robbed of its ideal beauty, the season offers practical

<sup>1</sup> Ovid *Met.* i. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Georgics* ii. 519 ff. 538.

<sup>3</sup> *Georgics* ii. 136 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Epodes* xvi. 44-46.

<sup>5</sup> *Odes*. iii. 18. 13: *Inter audaces lupus errat agnos.*

<sup>6</sup> The variations of climate in different parts of Italy make exact limits for the seasons impracticable. The poets divide the seasons by the procession of the zodiac, making autumn begin with Virgo (August 22) and end with Sagittarius (November 23). Thus Virgo, Libra, and Scorpio are the signs of autumn. Note, however, such a passage as Horace *Satires* i. 1. 36, where it is Aquarius (January 20) that makes gloomy the changing year (*inversum contristat Aquarius annum*). Then, too, many of the phenomena of *bruma hiems* in Italy are essentially autumnal in more northerly climates and for our purposes should be treated as such.

<sup>7</sup> Several of these topics are treated in Thomson's *Autumn* (text of 1730) in an essentially classical way. His storm wind is Auster, the typical disturber of autumn, called wintry (*hibernus*) by Tibullus i. 1. 37, and strong (*validus*), rainy (*pluvius*), and rain-bringing (*umidus*) by Lucretius, Ovid, and Vergil respectively; cf. Thomson, *Autumn*, 309: "The sultry south collects a potent blast." Thomson's description of autumn mists, for which Zippel (Thomson's *Seasons* [Berlin, 1908], p. xxxvi) cites Lucretius v. 463-66, is paralleled more closely elsewhere, cf. Thomson, *Seasons*, *Autumn*, 695-98, with Lucretius vi. 459-69, 476-81. In ll. 711-25, Thomson, still dealing with mists, borrows from the numerous ancient descriptions of the phenomena of solar eclipse. Following the same method, in a storm scene Thomson applies to wind a Lucretian description of flood, gaining thereby an extraordinary intensity for his description; cf. Thomson, *Autumn*, 314-16, 319-21, with Lucretius i. 271-95. Other touches in this same storm scene are drawn, as Zippel notes, from Vergil *Georgics* i. 322-27. For the migration and hibernation of birds as described in Thomson's *Autumn*, 775 ff., compare the Latin passages cited in Martin, *Birds of the Latin Poets* (Stanford University, 1914), pp. 227-30 and 232-34.

compensations in the pleasures of the chase.<sup>1</sup> There are nuts to be gathered in the autumn woods.<sup>2</sup>

The passages so far considered are for the most part descriptive and objective. In the older poets, reaction to nature in an emotional way is found more often in simile than in direct description or address. Such autumnal details as the last rose, the late grapes, the shivering vintner, withered fruit, and the fading, falling leaves were favorite poetical commonplaces, to several of which associations of melancholy attach. The leaves in simile are as old as Homer, suggesting first merely a comparison of number, "And they stood in the flowery meadow of Scamander, many as the leaves and flowers that come in the spring."<sup>3</sup> But the leaves also represent to Homer the ephemeral and transitory nature of man: "Great-souled son of Tydeus, why dost thou ask my race? For even as the race of leaves, so is the race of man. Now the wind strews the leaves on the ground and again the flourishing wood brings forth others, they come on in the season of spring. Even so the race of man now bears and now ceases."<sup>4</sup> Aeschylus has the "sear and yellow leaf of life,"<sup>5</sup> while Aristophanes develops the idea of our ephemeral nature with a large pathos: "Come now, ye men unsubstantial, like to the generation of leaves, of feeble might."<sup>6</sup> In Apollonius Rhodius the association is merely number.<sup>7</sup> Vergil also is explicitly comparing number in the famous lines: "Many as leaves that slip and fall in the woods in the first chill of autumn or birds that flock landward from the deep sea, when the wintry season drives them across the ocean and sends them in to the sunny lands."<sup>8</sup> But the selection of this simile for the shades awaiting Charon's bark bears with it an implication of sadness; compare also Seneca's imitation,<sup>9</sup> and Milton's, "Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa." Horace employs this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Horace *Epodes* ii. 29–36, and Thomson, *Autumn*, 357 ff. The resemblance here is merely topical, and in Thomson the chase is treated before the vintage.

<sup>2</sup> Vergil *Ecllogues* ii. 51–52, and Thomson, *Autumn*, 604 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Il.* ii. 467–68. <sup>4</sup> *Il.* vi. 145–49. <sup>5</sup> *Agamemnon* 79. <sup>6</sup> *Birds* 685 ff. <sup>7</sup> *iv.* 216–17.

<sup>8</sup> *Aen.* vi. 309–12:

Quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo  
Lapsa cadunt folia, aut ad terram gurgite ab alto  
Quam multae glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus  
Trans pontum fugat et terris immittit apricis.

<sup>9</sup> *Oedipus* 598.

simile in the Greek mold: As in the woods, with the passing years, the leaves change, those of one year falling, and new ones growing in their place, so words grow old and perish, passing like the generations of men from birth to maturity and then to death."<sup>1</sup> The Greek comparison of aging beauty to the withered grape is suggested by Horace on the old age of the courtesan, but autumnal leaves are used in his simile: "[Grieving] because the gay roisterers take more pleasure in the green ivy and in the dark myrtle, and consign the dry leaves to East Wind, Winter's fellow."<sup>2</sup> Compare also Ovid: "And as the laurel is evergreen nor ever loses a falling leafage, so has she everlasting honor?"<sup>3</sup> The words of maidens are lighter than falling leaves.<sup>4</sup> In a grawsome connection the comparison stands for rapidity: "No more quickly does the wind tear from a tall tree the leaves, already touched by the first chill of autumn and just barely clinging, than the limbs of the man were plucked apart by these impious hands."<sup>5</sup> To describe his decay of mind and body in his exile Ovid uses the yellowing leaves: "Since I set foot in Pontus my nights are sleepless, my wasted flesh scarce covers my bones, food has no charm, and my body has a color like that of the leaves in autumn, nipped by the first cold and wounded by early winter, and I have no strength to stay me."<sup>6</sup> The same comparison occurs of

<sup>1</sup> *Ars poetica* 60–62:

Ut silvae foliis pronus mutantur in annos,  
prima cadunt: ita verborum vetus interit aetas  
et iuvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.

<sup>2</sup> *Odes* i. 25. 17–20:

laeta quod pubes hedera virenti  
gaudeat pulla magis atque myrto  
aridas frondis hiemis sodali  
dedicet Euro [Hebro ?].

<sup>3</sup> Ovid *Trist.* iii. 1. 45–46:

utque viret semper laurus, nec fronde caduca  
carpitur, aeternum sic habet illa decus?

<sup>4</sup> Ovid *Am.* ii. 16. 45:

verba puellarum, foliis leviora caducis.

<sup>5</sup> Ovid *Met.* iii. 729–31:

non citius frondes autumno frigore tactas,  
iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore ventus  
quam sunt membra viri manibus direpta nefandis.

<sup>6</sup> Ovid *Trist.* iii. 8. 27–31:

ut tetigi Pontum, vexant insomnia, vixque  
ossa tegit macies, nec iuvat ora cibus;  
quique per autumnum percussis frigore primo  
est color in foliis quae nova laesit hiems,  
is mea membra tenet nec viribus allevor ullis.

the pallor of sudden grief: "She [Procris] turned pale as the late leaves, when the clusters are plucked from the vines, turn pale, wounded by early winter."<sup>1</sup> Again, the fallen leaves add pathos, without direct comparison: "Byblis, fallen thou, and with thy face dost press the fallen leaves."<sup>2</sup>

Roman prose writers exhibit the same comparison, as Cicero, who has applied it to fruits: "But yet there had to be something final, and, as in the case of the berries on the trees and the fruits of the earth, shriveled, as it were, and ready to fall with a seasonable ripeness, a thing which ought to be borne with resignation by the philosopher."<sup>3</sup> And again: "As the apples can with difficulty be wrenched from the trees if they are green, but, if they are mellow and ripe, fall of their own accord, it takes violence to wrench the life from young men, but maturity takes this from the old."<sup>4</sup> Tacitus records a particularly interesting case of dream interpretation: "Some said that he had a vision of a wreath of vine, the leaves of which were withering, and that he interpreted this to mean that the death of the Emperor in late autumn was foreshadowed."<sup>5</sup> Augustine elaborates on the simile: "(To the kingdom of God there will be no end;) and not in such wise that, as some make place by death and others succeed to their room by birth, a mere outward show of perpetuity will result, as in the case of a tree which is clad in perennial foliage, the same greenness seems to remain, but, while some leaves come gliding down, others are continually growing, and keep up the appearance of shade; but all the citizens in this kingdom are immortal."<sup>6</sup>

For comparison with the modern poets in the treatment of nature, one of the most interesting of the Latins is Ovid. Ovid had perhaps no very deep or subtle feeling for nature, and even in those passages where he most nearly approximates the modern method his rhetorical bent is still in evidence. Nevertheless his technique in this respect is most suggestive. We must suspect that in all cases where he

<sup>1</sup> Ovid *Ars amatoria* iii. 703-4:

Palluit, ut serae, lectis de vite racemis,  
Palescunt frondes, quas nova laesit hiems;

<sup>2</sup> Ovid. *Met.* ix. 651:

Bybli, iaces frondesque tuo premis ore caducas

<sup>3</sup> *Cato Maior* ii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Annals* xi. 4. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 71.

<sup>6</sup> *Civ.* xxii. 1.

develops sympathy between man and nature we have variations of the pathetic fallacy. There are many patent cases of this device,<sup>1</sup> one of which has to do with the falling leaves: "The woods mourned for Phyllis, shedding their leaves."<sup>2</sup> In the Narcissus episode the woods are in like manner personified and represented as sympathetic to lovers: "Stretching out his arms to the surrounding woods he cried: 'Ho woods, has ever passion been more cruel? Well do you know, indeed, and have been ere now a timely hiding-place for many. Now, since so many generations are compassed by your life, tell me, in all your days have you beheld lover that pined as I?'"<sup>3</sup> Related to the foregoing passages, yet with something added, is the elaborate episode in the epistle of Sappho to Phaon where the erotic melancholy of the deserted heroine finds a sympathetic setting in autumnal woods: "I sought out the wood that often had offered a couching-place to us and with its thick leafage woven a deep shade. . . . I flung myself down and touched the spot where you had lain. The grass, so grateful to us before, drank in my tears. Nay more, the boughs, stripped of their leaves, seemed to be mourning and no song birds sweetly twittered. Only that most sorrowful mother, she that took on her husband an unhallowed vengeance, the Daulian bird sang of Ismarian Itys. The bird sings Itys and Sappho sings her deserted love."<sup>4</sup> The significant points in this passage may be summarized as follows: The autumn woods with their leafless trees are selected by the poet as the ideal setting for erotic melancholy. He notes the almost utter absence of bird-song which had chimed in

<sup>1</sup> *Trist.* i. 4. 10; i. 11. 8; v. 5. 29–30; *ex Ponto* ii. 1. 26–28; *Her.* xix. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Ars amatoria* iii. 38:

Depositis silvas Phyllida flesse comis.

<sup>3</sup> *Met.* iii. 441–45:

ad circumstantes tendens sua bracchia silvas;  
ecquid, io silvae, crudelius, inquit, amavit?  
ecquem, cum vestrae tot agantur saecula vitae,  
qui sic tabuerit, longo meministis in aeo?

<sup>4</sup> *Heroides* xv. 143–44, 149–55:

invenio silvam, quae saepe cubilia nobis  
praebuit et multa textit opaca coma:

ineubui, tetigique locum, qua parte fuisti.  
grata prius lacrimas combibit herba meas.  
quin etiam rami positis lugere videntur  
frondibus et nullae dulce queruntur aves.  
sola virum non ulta pie moestissima mater  
concinnit Ismarium Daulias ales Ityn.  
ales Ityn, Sappho desertos cantat amores.

with brighter mood. The only songster is the nightingale, to the ancients a bird of sadness. The fall song of the nightingale is, however, a palpable improbity.<sup>1</sup> This passage is particularly interesting in comparison with Thomson.<sup>2</sup>

I have already remarked that no very sharp line can be drawn between the end of autumn and the beginning of winter in the Latin poets. The feeling of the poets for late autumn may be seen from the epithets applied to *hiems*. This season, because of the cessation of growth, is barren (*sterilis*)<sup>3</sup> and inactive (*iners*).<sup>4</sup> Because of mist and cloud Ovid calls winter gloomy, dismal (*tristis*): "but when gloomy Winter raises his ugly head."<sup>5</sup> For the same reason, and from the naked trees, neglected fields, etc., winter is ill-favored, misshapen, unkempt (*turpis, deformis, horrida*). From storm and wind winter is savage (*saeva*),<sup>6</sup> and boisterous, unruly (*impotens*).<sup>7</sup> From frosts, winter is hoary (*cana*).<sup>8</sup> Such epithets as hard, unyielding (*dura*), and icy (*glacialis*) belong to the true northern winter that fetters the streams and covers the fields with snow.

From these expressions it is clear that the Roman poets found the declining year distasteful. The Roman fondness for trees, especially shade trees, is well known. A landscape without shade had no charm for them. Ovid never mastered his disgust for the treeless plains of his exile. Dark-foliaged evergreens were no compensation; in fact, dark foliage suggested cold to the Roman poets. Yew trees are an example of this. Vergil, discussing the various kinds of soil, says: "It is hard to detect that villainous cold: only pine trees and evil yew trees or dark ivy will sometimes afford a clue."<sup>9</sup> Again, "The vine loves hillsides, yew trees love the North Wind and the cold."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Martin, *Birds of the Latin Poets*, p. 229. Milton, *Il Pensero*, does not fall into this error; Thomson does.

<sup>2</sup> *Autumn*, 910–20, and *Winter*, 40 ff. (first occurrence of the passage).

<sup>3</sup> Martial viii. 68. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ovid *Ex Ponto* i. 2. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ovid. *Trist.* iii. 10. 9:

at cum tristis hiems squalentia protulit ora

<sup>6</sup> Seneca *Herc. Oet.* 384.

<sup>7</sup> Martial i. 49. 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Georgics* ii. 256–58:

at sceleratum exquirere frigus  
difficile est: piceae tantum taxique nocentes  
interdum aut hederae pandunt vestigia nigrae.

<sup>10</sup> *Georgics* ii. 113:

Bacchus amat colles. Aquilonem et frigora taxi.

The melancholy associations for Roman poets of the leafless trees or those darker greens that survive the frosts of autumn are developed in numerous ways. The descriptions of Thrace and Scythia that are such a favorite commonplace in the poets make one example. We have noted a certain resemblance between descriptions of the Golden Age, the Fortunate Isles, etc., and idyllic pictures of autumn and the vintage season. In contrast to this it is interesting to see that accounts of the lower world have a great deal in common with poetic descriptions of northern climates or late autumn in Italy. The way to the underworld leads through a "dark forest," haunted by fear: "Entering upon a grove darkened with black fear, he drew near to the Manes and their dreaded king."<sup>1</sup> The downward path is gloomy with funereal yew trees.<sup>2</sup> It is beset with mists and fogs that rise from the lifeless Styx.<sup>3</sup> Pallor and Winter possess these lifeless regions.<sup>4</sup> Theseus, returning from the lower world, describes it: "There no lush meadows sprout with greenness; no ripening harvest billows in the gentle West Wind; no orchard has its boughs laden with apples, but one great waste lies barren, of deep soil, neglected, and the unsightly earth is numbed in everlasting idleness, the dolorous goal of things and limit of the universe; the air is stagnant, without motion, black night broods over a lifeless world, and the place of death is worse than death itself."<sup>5</sup> The presence of Tantalus on earth repels nature, "withers each tree, the boughs

<sup>1</sup> Vergil *Georgics* iv. 468-69:

et caligantem nigra formidine lucum  
ingressus, Manesque adiit regemque tremendum.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid *Met.* iv. 432:

Est via declivis funesta nubila taxo.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 434:

Styx nebulas exhalat iners.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 436:

Pallor Hiemsque tenant late loca senta.

<sup>5</sup> Seneca *Hercules furens* 697-706:

Non prata viridi laeta facie germinant;  
nec adulta leni fluctuat Zephyro seges;  
non ulla ramos silva pomiferos habet:  
sterilis profundi vastitas squalit soli,  
et foeda tellus torpet aeterno siti,  
rerumque moestus finis et mundi ultima;  
immotus aer haeret, et pigro sedet  
nox atra mundo; cuncta moerore horrida,  
ipsaque Morte peior est Mortis locus.

stand naked, and the fruit recedes.”<sup>1</sup> Ovid sets the abode of famine in such a landscape: “There is a place in the remotest regions of icy Scythia, a soil unblest, a barren land, void of trees or harvests, where dwell lifeless Cold, Pallor, and Palsy, with ravenous Famine.”<sup>2</sup> In these and other descriptions of the lower world<sup>3</sup> it seems quite plain that the coloring is in large part that of late autumnal landscapes, or at least what would be such in more northerly climates than that of Italy. Actual winter, with its attendant ice and snow, scarcely figures in accounts of the classic Hades. The rivers of Hades are not frost bound, but sluggish, muddy, shrouded in mists, and grown with ugly reeds. In addition to *Hiems*, *Pallor*, *Tremor*, etc., we have such other personifications as Old Age (*Senectus*), Fear (*Pavor*), and Sorrow (*Dolor*). The atmosphere is full of melancholy. Thus Milton is strictly following the classical mode when, in *L'Allegro*, he banishes Melancholy to “Stygian caves forlorn.” Thomson too may be said, I think, to be working along established lines when he makes his “Philosophic Melancholy” a concomitant of the barren trees and the declining year.

<sup>1</sup> Seneca *Thyestes* 110–11:

pallescit omnis arbor, ac nudus stetit  
fugiente pomo ramus;

<sup>2</sup> Ovid *Met.* viii. 788–91:

est locus extremis Scythiae glacialis in oris,  
triste solum, sterilis, sine fruge, sine arbore, tellus;  
Frigus iners illic habitat, Pallorque Tremorque,  
et ieuna Fames:

<sup>3</sup> The last two passages quoted are of course not direct descriptions of the underworld, but they belong to the same *genre*.